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SPOKANE COUNTY GANG ASSESSMENT GIVES CLARITY TO GROWING PROBLEM

With gang violence becoming more of a problem for Spokane County, the need to create a Comprehensive Gang Assessment for Spokane County was a priority of the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC). While the Spokane 6 Year Plan had been updated among the Prevention Partners, it was necessary to document and track the gangs and gang activity occurring throughout Spokane. It would be of tremendous help to the partners including law enforcement working on reducing the impact of gangs in the Spokane region.

How did Commerce and GSSAC help address the problem?

GSSAC's Community Coalition and Spokane County Sheriff's Office, along with numerous other agencies worked in collaboration together to create this Assessment. Through a Justice Assistance Grant provided by the Department of Commerce, GSSAC was able to take the lead on this responsibility, and worked to establish increased collaboration among agencies, and devoted much of its time developing the framework for this assessment, as well as portraying an accurate depiction of the gang situation in Spokane County.

Benefits: The entire community is benefiting from the Assessment being established. **Recognized by several entities as the first Comprehensive Gang Assessment in the state of Washington**, the Spokane County Gang Assessment has provided a basis for gang awareness strategic planning and implementation. We are hopeful that having this tool in place will facilitate receipt of future funding to combat the gang problem and related issues. Spokane now has a concrete document that illustrates our gang situation. The Spokane Gang Assessment has been shared throughout the state with counties in hopes of increasing the awareness of the need for resources to combat the gang problem statewide. Many counties are using the Spokane Gang Assessment as a guideline to completing their own. The Washington state Attorney General has used the Spokane Assessment in raising awareness of the need for a statewide plan and resources to combat gangs. Having the assessment continually updated will hopefully enable the Spokane Community to have increased access to resources for our youth, and should lead to more focused efforts on combating gangs, and getting help to those who need it in the future.

Less gang involvement means less overall crime, particularly violent crime, safer neighborhoods, less youth joining and potentially ruining their futures. The more our Community Mobilization efforts can raise awareness of the public on this topic and the better educated they are on what citizens can do to help will result in reducing the impact of gangs on the communities of Washington State.

Results: The Spokane County Gang Assessment began as a compilation of basic information about gangs in the Spokane region. It has grown to be a living document that will be updated and maintained on a continuing basis. The assessment has been distributed to policymakers, service providers, and community members at large in an effort to educate the community, build capacity for addressing the problem, and engage the coalition in public policy work around gang prevention. To receive a copy of the Assessment, please email Broberts@gssac.org.

Summary: Sharing resources like the Spokane County Gang Assessment can help reduce the impact of gangs and the related crime across communities in Washington State. The positive force of coalitions through Community Mobilization Against Substance Abuse and Violence can change the world through capacity building and community organizing. Working together to fight crime and promote safety in every neighborhood can increase economic viability, reduce the need for criminal justice systems, and promote community engagement all while helping our youth make positive choices.



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